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ABSTRACT

A personal point of view concerning various aspects of Homerica characterizes this brief state-of-the-art report. Commentary is directed to: (1) first readers; (2) the Parry-Lord approach to the study of the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" as representatives of a type of oral, formulaic, poetry; (3) analysts, unitarians, and neo-analysts; (4) recent publications by British scholars; (5) archaeology and history; (6) language and meter; and (7) the "Odyssey". (RL)

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The present state of Homeric studies

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Introduction

A select reading-list of Homerica, with a running commentary, cannot fail to be invidious. There is little chance that one person can fairly survey the vast field. All that I can offer is my own view-point, more literary than archaeological or linguistic. As to the limits of the survey, I have endeavoured to go far enough back in each separate aspect to clarify the present situation.

Subdivision of so involved a subject raises some difficulty. It would almost be possible to divide it according to nationality, because trends of attitude and research do tend to follow the local conditions in a scholar's home land; but this would not in practice work altogether satisfactorily, and in any case there are here and there some strong and independent scholars who swim against the current of their habitat, and cause small subsidiary eddies by their own motion. I have therefore chosen a rather complicated system of sub-headings.

First readers

There was surely no doubt in the thirties and forties what book one would put into the hands of a schoolboy who wished to learn about Homer. Bowra's *Tradition and Design in the Iliad*[1] was the obvious choice. And with it, more archaeological but by no means limited to archaeological matters, Nilsson's *Homer and Mycenae*[2]. These were excellent books. Bowra, in spite of some notorious inaccuracies, was like a breath of fresh air, sweeping aside and disregarding much of the obscurity and complication of the then prevalent school of 'analytical' critics. Nilsson

[1] Oxford (1930); now available in paperback. [2] Methuen (1933).

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was equally magnanimous. Indeed both these books make admirable reading still. For the young reader of today, however, perhaps they are a little dated; their style and their archaeological content are of their age. If the beginner can read French, I personally should recommend the three small paperback volumes entitled *Homère*[3] by the Belgian scholar A. Severyns. Professor Severyns writes with notable enthusiasm, clarity and wit. The lover of Homer will not find his appreciation diminished (as sometimes happens) by the reading of these small volumes; and he will find his knowledge and perception increased.

The Parry/Lord approach

Far the most important advance in Homeric studies in this century has been the discussion of the poems as representatives of a type of oral, formulaic, poetry–discussion indebted primarily to Milman Parry. This is no place to repeat again the technical arguments of Milman Parry's thesis, 'L'Epithète traditionelle dans Homère', and his later articles.[4] Rather I will try to express as clearly as I can what I take to be the present position of those who have assimilated into their attitudes to Homer the fact that he represents a method of poetic composition so alien to our experience.

The phraseology of the Homeric poems follows formulaic patterns–some of them of great age. The poet had a regular way of expressing a given concept in a given metrical space. This was not a fixed system, and the word 'formula' is potentially misleading. They were *patterns* of phrases, which could be modified and altered if the poet

[3] Collection Lebègue, Brussels. Vol. i 'Le Cadre Historique', first edition 1943, but recently completely rewritten; vol. ii 'Le Poète et son Œuvre', 1943; vol. iii 'L'Artiste', 1948.

[4] *L'Epithète traditionelle dans Homère*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres (1928); 'The Homeric Gloss', TAPA 59 (1928), 233-47; 'Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse Making. I Homer and Homeric Style', HSCP 41 (1930), 73-147; id. II 'The Homeric Language as the Language of an Oral Poetry', HSCP 43 (1932) 1-50; 'Whole Formulaic Verses in Greek and Southslavic Heroic Song', TAPA 64 (1933), 179-97.

It has been announced that the collected papers of Milman Parry are shortly to be published by the Clarendon Press, with an introduction by Adam Parry, under the title *The Making of Homeric Verse* (YCS 20 (1966), 178, n. 4).

consciously or subconsciously wished. There is even an element of free association in this, which has perhaps escaped the critics. Like Virgil and T. S. Eliot,[5] Homer might find himself using a phrase which had been more at home in a different situation.[6]

The effect of an understanding of 'composition by formula' is to rule out of account all those writers–and they remain numerous–who claim that one line in the Iliad is a copy of another line in the Iliad; and endeavour to assess which had priority. The two lines are much more likely to be representatives of a common pattern, and not uniquely connected with each other.

A further consequence of greater familiarity with oral poetry was the realization that the subject matter of this sort of poetry was nearly as repetitive as the phraseology, and was to be explained in the same way. Parallel to 'composition by formula', there is 'composition by theme'. The best source for this argument is A. B. Lord's *The Singer of Tales*–a work based on the collection of Yugoslavian oral poetry initiated by Milman Parry and carried on by Lord, the Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard.[7] Lord gives examples of typical, recurrent, situations, the treatment of which becomes stylized in this sort of poetry–e.g. the sending of a letter, or the return of a long-lost husband. Whatever anyone may say about the detailed application of Lord's arguments to the Homeric poems themselves in the second part of this book, the first part surely came as a flash of illumination to a great many students of Homer in English-speaking lands.

From these considerations one learns that the poet was not composing freely. Both his patterns of expression and

[5] e.g. Invitus, regina, tuo de litore cessi. *Aen.* VI 460.
The Chair she sat in like a burnished throne,
etc. *The Waste Land*, 77.

[6] e.g. τίσασθαι δ' Ἑλένης ὁρμήματά τε στοναχάς τε. *Il.* 2.356 (= 2.590)
δαιμόνι', οὐ μὲν καλὰ χόλον τόνδ' ἔνθεο θυμῷ. *Il.* 6.326.
See *Proc. Camb. Phil. Soc.* 1956/7, 23-4.

[7] *The Singer of Tales*, Oxford (1960); *Serbo-Croatian Heroic Songs*, vols. i and ii, Harvard (1953/4).

the incidents in his story were conditioned by the vast system of phrases and themes which made up his poetic repertoire (i.e. his memory or his muse). For this reason we must be very cautious when a modern critic analyses too carefully the logical sequence of thought in the poem. The modern scholar is not the best judge of the oral poet's canons of relevance.[8]

There is nothing more extraordinary than the disregard of German-speaking scholars for Milman Parry and the new awareness. The analysts of the old school are not able to see his importance, because they need the inconsistencies which he explains to support their theories; but even such sympathetic and helpful writers as Schadewaldt and Reinhardt, whose aesthetic appreciation has led them to the same unitarian point of view as is natural to those who have followed Parry, seem never so much as to refer to Parry.[9]

Analysts unitarians neo-analysts

In the long debate about the unity or otherwise of the authorship of the Iliad, it is hardly disputable that the most learned and accurate critics have been 'analysts', the poets and appreciators have been 'unitarians'. Many of us think that after Parry and Lord the debate should no longer have any meaning; this, however, does not quench the flow of books. The Swiss scholar Von der Mühll is the latest, and (for our generation) perhaps the

[8] D. L. Page, who speaks highly elsewhere of the work of Milman Parry, remarks (*The Homeric Odyssey*, 55), 'The poet, whose story depends on what he promises here (*Od.* 1. 269-96), must have some purpose and some plan in what he says.' It is improbable that poets composing in this way had a consciously thought out purpose and plan in the way Page means. Again, G. S. Kirk spends many pages of his long book *The Songs of Homer* adducing 'structural anomalies' which make it difficult to believe that the Iliad was 'the original creation of one man' (p. 211); with small variations of phrase he says (pp. 215, 216, 217, 218) that such and such a lack of consequentiality is unthinkable in 'a poet *creating freely*'. Kirk seems to have forgotten his own admirable description of the operations of an oral poet in pp. 72-83 of the same book, where he shows, as I have here, that the oral poet was not at all 'creating freely'.

[9] In fairness it should be added that American scholars are now responding in kind: e.g. C. R. Beye, *The Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Epic Tradition* (1966), 235, 'Almost all significant and informative books and articles that have to do with Homer's poems are written in English'.

best of the analysts. His works on both Iliad and Odyssey are in the form of a running commentary through the poems.[10] This is an example of the intelligence and usefulness of the analytical critic; even if one does not accept Von der Mühll's detailed solution to the Homeric problem, his work can stand as a compendium of knowledge about the difficult and controversial passages in the poems. In general, of course, the Germans are the analysts; their views were formed by the climate of opinion in the universities of their youth. They are learned and intelligent, but their solution is the solution of the rational scholar investigating textual problems in his study, with little concern for the conditions of the production of oral poetry. The following analytically minded scholars should also be mentioned: G. Jachmann, W. Theiler, and (perhaps a rather half-hearted analyst) H. Fränkel.[11]

Old-fashioned unitarians, who are nowadays generally described in print as 'naïve', still exist, of course, but they are no longer concerned to answer the arguments of analytical critics against unity of authorship. Their place is taken by a very interesting school of 'neo-analysts'. These scholars analyse the detail of the Iliad (just as the analysts do), but find in it patterns that convince them that they are dealing with one poet. They discuss in effect the influences and limitations on the poet's freedom of composition, to explain features which we in our age may find unfamiliar. They find parallels with typical scenes elsewhere – in other heroic poetry or even in modern Greek folk-poetry. They are coming to the same conclusions, in my opinion, as the Parry/Lord school; but, consistently with the pattern among German-speaking continental scholars, they do not accept as valid, or even normally refer to, Parry's work.

[10] The Odyssey, the earlier publication, in R. E. Suppl.-Band VII (1940), 696-768; the Iliad as *Kritisches Hypomnema zur Ilias*, Basel (1952).

[11] G. Jachmann, 'Homerische Einzellieder', *Festschrift J. Kroll*, Köln (1949); W. Theiler, 'Die Dichter der Ilias', *Festschrift Tièche*, Bern (1947); H. Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums*, New York (1951), 7-132.

I shall mention three 'neo-analysts', all fine scholars who with a delicacy and a belief in a single poet try to open our eyes to the finesse, intentions and limitations of Homer. They are Schadewaldt, Kakridis and Reinhardt. W. Schadewaldt's *Iliasstudien* appeared in 1938, just before the war, and was reprinted in 1943, most of the copies being destroyed by bombing. It has therefore not had the influence it might have had in this country if the times had not been so adverse. It should be a source of general satisfaction that it has just reappeared in a photographic reprinting by Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt. Schadewaldt deals mostly with Book XI of the Iliad, both in detail and in its relationship to other parts of the poem; he has a particular concern to answer the arguments of the most influential of the analysts–Wilamowitz. J. T. Kakridis's *Homeric Researches* (Lund, 1949) is written in English, and should be high on anyone's reading-list about Homer. Kakridis's particular interest is in the repetition of folk-tale themes, which can in many cases be exemplified from modern Greek folk-poetry. K. Reinhardt, the third of these scholars, had projected a major book on Homer, but it was in a fragmentary and unfinished state when he died. U. Hölscher edited it from Reinhardt's papers, as *Die Ilias und ihr Dichter* (Göttingen, 1961). It is heavy going for an English reader, and involves a background of Homeric scholarship which is not ours; moreover, just as Schadewaldt was anxious to answer Wilamowitz, so Reinhardt rarely loses sight of Von der Mühll. But Reinhardt, like Schadewaldt, is a most sensitive interpreter, impressive in both his learning and his insight.

Recent publications by British scholars

Three books may be selected for special mention under this heading–D. L. Page's *History and the Homeric Iliad*,[12] G. S. Kirk's *The Songs of Homer*,[13] and *Companion to Homer*[14] edited by A. J. B. Wace and F. H. Stubbings. (I leave Page's *The Homeric Odyssey* for later.) Page is the most entertaining as well as the most scholarly of British

[12] University of California Press (1959). [13] CUP (1962).
[14] Macmillan (1962).

Homerists, and this book must rank high among all his writings. It is mostly concerned, as its title indicates, with the history behind Homer, i.e. the Mycenaean age; but this includes discussion of both the Catalogue of Ships and the noun-epithet formulas in the Iliad, so that the reader does not lose sight of Homer in the shadowy second millennium. Page is the Bentley of the present day, with the wilfulness as well as the unapproachable scholarship of his predecessor. There are two appendices to this book, which argue an extreme analytical view of the composition of the Iliad, as though Parry had never been. Among other improbabilities, we are told that the end of the seventh book was added to the Iliad after the time of Thucydides.

Kirk's book again, *The Songs of Homer*, is very impressive. Encyclopaedically accurate, it covers all aspects of the Homeric problem as it exists today. It has many virtues, and (in my opinion) two faults: it is laboriously written, and thus laborious to read; and secondly in this case Homer does get lost. The snaffle and the bit are exhaustively described, but we miss the horse.

Companion to Homer is the book for the shelves of the school library. It has reputable articles by different scholars on the various aspects of Homeric studies. The book is perhaps unbalanced in that half of it is devoted to archaeology–not surprisingly, in view of its distinguished editors. To me, the two chapters by J. A. Davison, on the Transmission of the Text, and the Homeric Question, stand out as the best.[15]

Further English language scholarship may perhaps be referred to under the heading of geometric criticism. Originating in an article by J. L. Myres in JHS 1932, a view has spread that the construction of the Iliad may usefully be compared with the design on a geometric vase. The two exponents of this remarkable attitude in recent years have been T. B. L. Webster and C. H.

[15] The recent death of Professor Davison is a great loss to Homeric scholarship. His long-awaited commentary on the Iliad might well have been the first to challenge comparison with Leaf.

Whitman.[16] Of course their books contain, as do all books on Homer, helpful and interesting comments on Homeric matters, but it is their allegiance to this geometric theory which sticks in the mind of at any rate this reader.

Archaeology and history

A word should be said about archaeology and Homer. The position is of course that the Homeric authors composed their works in–say–the eighth century, but their characters live and act in a romanticized, heroic world, embodying memories of the Mycenaean age some four centuries earlier. The question is to what extent does the archaeology of the Mycenaean age illuminate Homer. Nilsson, Miss H. L. Lorimer,[17] Wace/Stubbings, the decipherment of the tablets from Pylos and Cnossos–all these tell us about the Mycenaean age, and the information is of the greatest interest; but opinion is moving more and more to the realization that for Homer the eighth century is more important than the twelfth. Mycenaean archaeology and geography are a sort of background, but they do not explain the significance of the Iliad. One may well question whether the eighth century is much more help; but at least for the Odyssey the relevance of the age of colonization is obvious, and even in the Iliad the world of the similes and the designs on the Shield of Achilles, and to some extent the society portrayed in the poem, becomes clearer when we realize that the poet was not always archaizing. On this, one may usefully read Mireaux's *Les Poèmes Homériques et l'Histoire Grecque*,[18] and a recent article by F. Hampl called *Die Ilias ist kein Geschichtsbuch*.[19] Mireaux is growing in popularity; references to his work seem more frequent and less scornful than they were a few years ago. Hampl

[16] T. B. L. Webster, *From Mycenae to Homer*, Methuen (1958); Cedric H. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition*, Oxford (1958).

[17] *Homer and the Monuments*, Macmillan (1950).

[18] E. Mireaux, *Les Poèmes Homériques et l'Histoire Grecque*, I *Homère de Chios et les routes de l'étain* (1948); II *L'Iliade, l'Odyssée, et les rivalités coloniales* (1949). Editions Albin Michel, Paris.

[19] *Serta Philologica Aenipontana* (1962), 37-63. See also the discussion in JHS 84 (1964), 1-20.

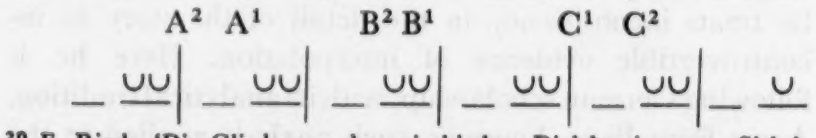
won golden opinions by his article, though perhaps he went too far in doubting even a Greek expedition against Troy at all, and suggesting that it was more likely that Troy VIIa fell to invaders from the north.

Language and metre

The expert view of the relationships of the dialects which make up the composite language of Homeric poetry has changed in the last ten years. Instead of the picture of a succession of waves of invaders into Greece–Achaeans, Ionians, Aeolians, Dorians–each bringing their own dialect forms, it is now considered that Ionic and Aeolic are descendants of the language spoken in, respectively, the south and the north Mycenaean world. The strong distinguishing features of these two dialects are argued to have grown up in the years after 1200 BC.[20] It would take a clearer mind than mine to see whether this helps the interpretation of Homer.

Linguistic work closer to Homer has appeared in the last few years, with post-Parry discussion of the language found in the formulas. In particular, the partial loss of the digamma even in formulas, and the appearance of the ν-movable, may show something about the antecedents and date of Homer.[21]

Those who are interested in the Homeric hexameter will enjoy the discussion by H. N. Porter in Yale Classical Studies of 1951.[22] Following a much earlier article by H. Fränkel, Porter showed how helpful it was to treat the hexameter as consisting of four cola, with word ends typically in the positions shown in the diagram below:



[20] E. Risch, 'Die Gliederung der griechischen Dialekte in neuer Sicht', *Mus. Helv.* 12 (1955), 61-76; J. Chadwick, 'The Greek dialects and Greek pre-history', *Greece and Rome* 3 (1956), 38-50. Both these are reprinted in the collection *Language and Background of Homer*, edited by G. S. Kirk, Heffer (1964).

[21] J. B. Hainsworth 'The Homeric formula and the problem of its transmission', *Bull. Inst. Class. Stud.* 9 (1962), 57-68; A. Hoekstra, *Homeric modifications of formulaic prototypes*, Amsterdam (1965).

[22] H. N. Porter, 'The early Greek hexameter', YCS 12 (1951), 3-63; Fränkel's article was in *Gött. Nachr.* (1926), 197-229.

This is to say that in each of the small areas A, B and C there are two common positions (one commoner than the other) for the ends of words concluding the short cola. This helps one to see the word and rhythm patterns in the hexameter; but it is descriptive and not explanatory in any real sense, as G. S. Kirk rightly points out in a very recent contribution to this field.[23]

The Odyssey

I have left the Odyssey to the end. It is a lighter work, and the critics have lain less heavily on it. Only three books about the Odyssey call for mention, in my opinion, and none of them is very recent. They are: W. J. Woodhouse, *The Composition of Homer's Odyssey*;[24] M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*;[25] and D. L. Page, *The Homeric Odyssey*.[26] Woodhouse's book is basic. He brings out with extraordinary clarity the fairy-tale elements in the story. Finley approaches the Odyssey from the point of view of a social historian, and has memorable things to say about the life of the people. Page composed his *Homeric Odyssey* (it was in fact a series of lectures at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania) earlier than *History and the Homeric Iliad*. For sheer readability, brilliance and vigour it would be difficult to find anything comparable with this; but it is a work of which students should be wary. Weak arguments are given the same rhetorical force as strong ones; indeed one feels that the persuasion of his audience was more important to the author than the search for truth. Moreover, he shows here too the same lack of comprehension of the confusions natural to oral poetry, so that he treats inconsistency in the detail of the story as incontrovertible evidence of interpolation. Here he is following German scholarship, with its analytical tradition. Apart from Page, however, such analysis applied to the Odyssey has had remarkably little influence on English-speaking Homerists; indeed, it seems to most people even

[23] 'The Structure of the Homeric Hexameter', YCS 20 (1966), 76-104.
[24] Oxford (1930).
[25] Published 1954 in the States; revised edition, Chatto & Windus (1956).
[26] Oxford (1955).

more obvious that the Odyssey is a single, intended, composition by one poet than that the Iliad is.

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